



PRESS RELEASE

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PHOENIX MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO ILLEGALLY POSSESSING AMMUNITION AND FIREARMS

PHOENIX -- James Joseph Hankins, 39, of Phoenix, pleaded guilty in federal district court here on March 24, 2005 to possession of firearms and ammunition while being an unlawful user of, or addicted to, controlled substances. He entered his guilty plea directly to the court on Count One of the indictment against him without any plea agreement from the government. While entering his guilty plea, Hankins admitted to Judge Susan R. Bolton that he knowingly possessed the firearms and ammunition while he was a regular user of heroin and methamphetamine.

Hankins had been charged with violating Title 18 , U.S. Code, Section 922(g)(3). He was arrested March 24, 2004 when agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives served a search warrant on his North Central Phoenix home and seized nearly 170,000 rounds of ammunition ranging from .9 millimeter to .50 caliber, and nearly 20 firearms, including a Barrett .50 caliber long range rifle, several assault weapons and shotguns, and assorted sidearms. Agents also seized two spools of high explosive detonation cord from Hankins' residence, as well as usable amounts of heroin, methamphetamine and drug paraphernalia. A prior trial of Hankins on this charge in January 2005 ended in a hung jury.

Sentencing is set before Judge Bolton on June 13, 2005. A conviction for possession of firearms or ammunition while being an unlawful user of and addicted to a controlled substance carries a maximum penalty of 10 years, a \$250,000 fine or both.

The investigation in this case was conducted by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. The prosecution is being handled by Bill C. Solomon and John J. Tuchi, Assistant U.S. Attorneys, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR-04-372

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